

Avista Corporation Testimony in support of HB 553 (Nolan) Aquatic Invasive Species

Mr. Chair and members of the Committee; My name is Brian Burky and I am a Recreation/Land Use Specialist for Avista Corporation who owns and operates the largest private hydroelectric dam in northwest Montana near Noxon. With this Dam is the Noxon Rapids Reservoir which we own and operate under a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ("FERC") license. Invasive Species including Eurasian Milfoil is serious business for Avista and we have supported legislation dealing with this since inception.

The bill before you HB 553 will allow other entities to operate check stations and provide enforcement. Local efforts would supplement Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks ("MFWP") check stations and clearly not duplicate them. Avista believes that local control would be more responsive to local needs for check stations: for example fishing tournaments, popular early/late season access points, as well as providing flexible hours of operation.

Another positive for the bill in our view is that local control would result in more of a "buy-in" by local residents.

Another positive for the bill is that Montana Transportation Department Inspection stations at Ports of Entry would improve program effectiveness and efficiency.

We also believe that increased law enforcement involvement would clearly check and reduce drive-by rates and clearly improving effectiveness.

Avista has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding assistance for monitoring, treatment, check stations, and public outreach. It is also a spent hundreds of hours assisting with meeting facilitation, planning herbicide applications, coordinating dam operations with control efforts and is a very active member of the Sanders County AIS Task Force.

We urge a DO PASS on HB 553